house at the end of his work day while his mongrel dog sat and watched us. From the spring through the late summer of 1971, George was the focus of my sexuality. He was the veracity of my sexual desire.

As it would turn out, I became his sole sex partner for that brief summer. I have often speculated that perhaps among all of the homeboys who passed through his hands, I was the one *wanting* to learn more. George knew this, and to the extent that he could exploit my youth for his pleasure, I allowed myself to be exploited and fondled and sucked, because I wanted this, too. I wanted him. I didn't come back to the store and tease him and curse him as did the other boys who had fucked him. I didn't demand money as some did. After their orgasms they resented him, but what they really resented was the recognition of their own *homo* sexual desire.

I kept silent about our activities. I would dare not say that we were in love. I wasn't sure I loved myself at fourteen, but I knew that my dick got hard for George. Never once did I give any thought to the possibility that I might be committing some sin I would be punished for in hell. Sin was the furthest thing from my consciousness. Hell was all around me in the ghetto of my adolescence.

My dick did not fall off in his mouth. I did not turn green from kissing him. I didn't burst into flames during our orgasms, nor did he. In fact, during orgasm, I often called out Jesus' name, which seemed appropriate for warding off such evil as I might have imagined we were committing. If anything, I was most concerned about being caught by my buddies or his co-workers. To this day I'm convinced the other fellas didn't know that I, too, was being initiated by George. Our group identity and rapport did not allow for this kind of discussion or candor to occur.

I regret that we were never able to talk about our visits to George. I regret, too, that we were not able to sexually explore one another in the same way that we allowed George

to explore us. Ours was truly a fragile, stereotypical Black masculinity that would not recognize homo desire as anything but perverse and a deviation from the expected "role" of a man. The ridicule we risked incurring would have condemned us to forever prove our "manhood" or succumb to being the target of a hatred that was, at best, a result of hating *self* for desiring to sexually touch the flesh of another male.

At fourteen, I was astute enough to know my mouth should not reveal any desire that would further endanger me. There was no "older" brother at home to stand watch over my blossoming manhood. There was no father there, either. I was solely responsible for myself—the eldest sibling, the eldest son. Neither of those absences is an explanation for my sexual identity. Only nature knows the reason why.

During that same summer that George introduced me to homoeroticism, my public acceptance as "one of the boys" was severely challenged. The night is so clear to me. It was mid-August, sultry, humid, August, and the anticipation of returning to school was in the air. My buddies, Tommy, Tyrone, Leon, Peanut, and Kevin, we were all across the street from my house talking with some of the older boys—David, George, Doug, Wayne, Kenny, and Leon's brother, Crip.

My mother's bedroom was located at the front of our house and her windows faced out to the street. Her windows were open because there was no air conditioning in the house at that time. The night breeze was as much relief as we could hope for from the oppressive Washington summers.

Across the street from my house, on Douglas's and Kenny's front porch, we were talking about everything from sports to girls. It was the typical conversation of males in various stages of adolescence. We all shined in the streetlights that beat down on our variously muscular frames burnished by the summer sun. Our conversation rose and fell, exerting its brashness and bravado against the night, kicking around in our heads, drawing us into laughter and silence by